

MASOLI-DIVISION LINE

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CIVIL WORK -
PRELIMINARY

Preliminaries
Mason-Dixon Line

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Civil War Preliminaries

Mason-Dixon Line

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MASON AND DIXON'S LINE.

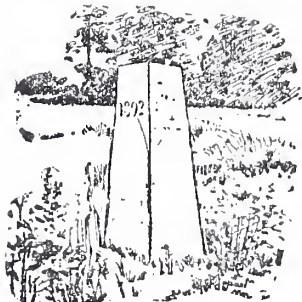
Popular Error as to Original Cause of Existence.

Staked Out Before the Revolutionary War, in 1763-7, to Mark the Pennsylvania and Maryland Boundaries.

From the New York Times.

OXFORD, PA., August 22.—For years there existed a supposition that Mason and Dixon's line was the line dividing the slave-holding from the non-slave-holding States. Time and again it was referred to as such by speakers on the floor of Congress, and it is one of the most widely quoted geographical lines in America. The line was run by Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, mathematicians and surveyors, of London, between the years 1763 and 1767, for the purpose of settling the disputed boundaries between the provinces of Pennsylvania and Maryland. These questions arose from mis-statements in the original grants of the provinces, resulting in disputes between the families of William Penn and Lord Baltimore. In 1732 an agreement was entered into by representatives of the proprietaries respecting the boundaries of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware, the first and last named provinces then in the possession of Penn's family. The difficulty of tracing the curved line between these two provinces was the occasion of the work afterward executed by Mason and Dixon.

Penn. in 1680, was interested in an application he had made for a grant of land, and had suggested to Sir John Werden, agent for the Duke of York, brother of Charles II., that his Lordship reserve the territory twelve miles north of New Castle, Del., the Duke having expressed a desire to retain the land twenty or thirty miles north



INITIAL MONUMENT OF CIRCLE, OF NEW CASTLE, DEL.

of the same town. The distance agreed upon was twelve miles. Penn's representatives soon afterward entered on the plantation, when they discovered that Lord Baltimore's patent, if continued to the fortieth degree of latitude, would embrace the site of Philadelphia, and leave the province harborless. The Duke of York, hoping to right matters, gave Penn a deed for New Castle, and the plantation twelve miles around it, in 1682. A second instrument conveyed to Penn all of the plantation from New Castle southward to Cape Henlopen. Lord Baltimore's protest against such disposals of territory in his charter reached the Duke, who had now succeeded to his brother on the throne. In 1685 the King's Council, hoping to right the objections of Baltimore, decided upon the following:

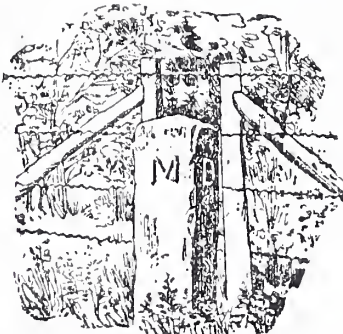
That for avoiding further differences, the tract of land lying between the Bay of Delaware and the Eastern Sea on the one side, and the Chesapeake Bay on the other, be divided into equal parts by a line from the latitude of Cape Henlopen to the fortieth degree of north latitude, the southern boundary of Pennsylvania by charter, and that the one-half thereof lying toward the Bay of Delaware and the Eastern Sea be adjudged to belong to his Majesty, and the other half to the Lord Baltimore, as comprised in his charter.

The 1732 agreement, entered into by the sons of William Penn and Charles Lord Baltimore, great-grandson of the pioneer patentee of the Province of Maryland, which accounts for the noticeable boundaries of Delaware, follows:

"That a semicircle should be drawn at twelve English statute miles around New-

Castle, agreeably to the deed of the Duke of York to William Penn in 1682; that an east and west line should be drawn beginning at Cape Henlopen, which was admitted to be below Cape Cornelius (the present Cape Henlopen), and running westward to the exact middle of the peninsula; that from the exact middle of the peninsula, between the two bays of Chesapeake and Delaware, and the end of the line intersecting it in the latitude of Cape Henlopen, a line should be run northward, so as to form a tangent with the periphery of the semicircle at New-Castle, drawn with the radius of twelve English statute miles, whether such a line should take a due north course or not; that after the said northwardly line should touch the New-Castle semicircle, it should be run further northward until it reached the same latitude as fifteen English statute miles due south of the most southern part of the City of Philadelphia; that from the northern point of such line a due west line should be run, at least for the present, across the Susquehanna River, and twenty-five miles beyond it—and to the western limits of Pennsylvania, when occasion and the improvements of the country should require; that that part of the due west line not actually run, though imaginary, should be considered to be the true boundary of Maryland and Pennsylvania, and that the route should be well marked by trees and other natural objects, and designated by stone pillars, sculptured with the arms of the contracting parties, facing their respective possessions."

The appointment of Commissioners followed, who ran lines for the New-Castle circle in 1732, 1739, 1750 and 1760. In some instances the Commissioners were extravagant, it being recorded that the body of 1750 had several items of expenses: "A hogshhead of port wine, eleven gallons of spirits, and forty-two gallons of rum, cost in all £27, 12s 6d." On July 4, 1760, an agreement, based on the decision of Lord Chancellor Hardwick, handed down in 1750, was signed by the representatives of the lands in question, and three years were spent in settling the boundary between Pennsylvania and Delaware. The Commissioners ran the east and west peninsula line, the twelve-mile circle in part, and established the tangent point in the periphery of the circle. Their progress was so disappoint-



TRIANGULAR MONUMENT AT JUNCTION OF THREE STATES. Showing Sides Facing Maryland and Delaware.

ingly slow to the proprietaries that they dissolved existing relations and engaged Mason and Dixon to finish the work. They were "to mark, run out, settle, fix, and determine all such parts of the circle, marks lines, and boundaries, as were mentioned in the several articles or commissions, and were not completed. They were to receive, in addition to support, 10s 6d each per day coming and returning and a guinea daily while in this country. On November 15, 1760, they arrived, and soon afterward they had an observatory erected in the southern part of Philadelphia, which was probably the first of the kind in this country. Mason and Dixon found the New-Castle circle run by previous surveyors of assistance to them, and in the fall of 1761 they caused a stone to be planted, fixing the northeast corner of Maryland.

This point was in latitude 39 degrees 43 minutes 26.3 seconds, and on this parallel they proceeded due westward, making vistas 8 yards wide through the forests, in the middle of which posts were set up that marked the line of the parallel run. The work continued until within thirty-six miles of the entire distance to be run, when an Indian warpath in the forest was noticed. For some time the Indians through whose territory the line extended had been in a state of unrest, and the Indian guides of Mason and Dixon told them it was the desire of the Six Nations that the surveys should cease at the warpath. The surveyors returned to Philadelphia, and, reporting the facts to the Commissioners, were discharged in December, 1767. In November, 1782, Col. Alexander McClean, of Pennsylv-

vania, and Joseph Neville, of Virginia, ran the remainder of the line, which was verified by astronomical observation and permanently marked in 1784. As requested by the Commissioners, Mason and Dixon erected at the end of each mile a stone with a P on one side and an M on the other; and

at the end of each fifth mile a stone bearing the arms of the Penns on one side and those of the Baltimores on the side opposite.

The stones, oolitic limestone, came from England, and their capacity to resist action of the weather is remarkable. One of the fifth-mile stones is on the farm of William Brown, a few miles south of Oxford, and the coat of arms of the pioneer proprietors are traceable, although exposed for over a century. Stones were set up as far west as Sideling Hill, about 132 miles from the northeast corner of Maryland. As the means of transporting them beyond that point were meager, the further use of the stones was abandoned. The continuation of the line was marked by piles of stone about 6 feet high as far as the summit of the Alleghenies, beyond which posts were planted and surrounded by stones. It is said the original stone set at the northeast corner of Maryland was accidentally broken and the pieces mended by leaden bands.

At the outbreak of the revolutionary war the lead was taken from the stone by Continental patriots and made into bullets. The upper part of the stone fell and was lost, the lower part became covered with earth, as it was situated in a ravine. For many years the supposition existed, as no marking stone was visible, that the three States, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware, came together at that point. In 1840 the Governors of these States appointed J. P. Eyre of Pennsylvania, H. G. S. Key of Maryland, and G. R. Riddle of Delaware, to locate the spot formerly occupied by the missing corner-stone. The assistance of Col. J. D. Graham, of the United States Topographical Engineers, was obtained, and the site of the missing stone found. The buried portion of the original stone was



FIVE-MILE STONES OF MASON AND DIXON'S LINE.

unearthed by men while sinking a hole for the new stone to be erected. The old one was buried and a substantial mark of Brandywine granite reared, it being about 1 foot square, with P and M on the sides.

On the brow of the hill sloping down to the ravine, which contains the stone, a waterbrook, and profusion of wild flowers, stands an old stone house. It is known to many of the sporting fraternity of Eastern cities, as in an adjoining field two noted prize fights occurred, the principals and their followers having made the house their headquarters while out for a mill. The first was between Kelley, of New York, and Collier, of Baltimore, on Pennsylvania soil. The second and last mill happened in Maryland, between Cleary and Weeden. Near by was the famous "Backwoods Academy," an institution founded by Alexander Terrell, who taught many students from the adjoining States. His first pupil was William H. Smith, of Newark, Del. Prof. Terrell's wife was Miss Mira J. Street, of Philadelphia, an artist of merit.

The tongue of land extending from Pennsylvania down between Maryland and Delaware is a topographical curiosity. At the upper part it is about 4160 feet wide (between Pennsylvania and Delaware), extends southward about three and a half miles, tapers to a point of intersection of the three States, and contains about 2500 acres. The land is a portion of London Britain Township, Chester County, Pa., but Delaware claims it as a part of White Clay Creek Hundred, New Castle County. She has "always exercised jurisdiction over it, treating her boundary as extending to the northeast corner of Maryland. The land is taxed in Delaware, the inhabitants vote as citizens of that State, and offenses committed therein are punished by her courts, while, on the other hand, Pennsylvania has never exercised any authority over it." This singular condition of affairs is probably owing to er-

ers made by the pioneer surveyors who ran the lines.


The circle of New Castle has been repeatedly the line of confusion with citizens residing close to it, the difficulty arising on account of the assessment and payment of taxes. To avoid this acts were passed a few years ago by the Legislatures of this State and Delaware authorizing a commission from each Commonwealth to "examine, survey and re-establish the boundary line," etc. The Commissioners of Pennsylvania were the Hon. Wayne MacVeagh, Robert E. Monaghan and William H. Miller. Delaware's commission was composed of the



MILE STONES OF MASON AND DIXON'S LINE.

Hon. Thomas F. Bayard, the Hon. J. H. Hoffecker, and Dr. B. L. Lewis. The work was completed by the joint commission in 1893. The initial monument is of Brandywine granite, quarried in Delaware. The terminal point, near the Delaware River, is of gneiss. The are marked with the names Pennsylvania and Delaware, north and south sides, respectively, and other inscriptions. Each stone is set $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet in the earth, and firmly secured by cement. The twenty-two mile stones and twenty-two half-mile stones are of gneiss, and are properly marked.

The triangular stone at the junction of the three States is marked P, M, and D, respectively, and carries the names of the Commissioners, who refixed it in 1849. This is the spot where the reported duel between Bennett and May, of New York, was to have occurred.



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